

COMMUNITY CAT OVERPOPULATION

Thomas A. Poe

May 28, 2025

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Abstract

Cats in America reach maturity around four months, and can produce one, two, or more litters each year. Stray cats, feral cats, community cats, wild cats are descriptions of cat populations without ownership, and if the issue is not addressed, can lead to public health concerns for residents of communities.

Legislatures at the local, county, state level create ordinances and regulations to control overpopulation issues. Over the last decade, two strategies have evolved to deal with cat overpopulation, designed to protect and improve the health and well-being of citizens. One strategy leans towards the killing of stray cats. Many consider this strategy as cruel treatment of animals. The other strategy represents a humane strategy leading to a significant reduction of stray cats.

Below, you will be able to follow one effort to establish a working relationship with local government that might consider a humane strategy for dealing with an overpopulation of stray, wild, feral, community cats.

It is important to note that the local government ordinances in place, allow for prosecution of residents that might otherwise follow a humane strategy for dealing with the overpopulation of stray, wild, feral, community cats in the community.

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Eden Valley City Council
P.O. Box 25
Eden Valley, MN 55329-0025

April 30, 2025

Presentation Request

Members, Eden Valley City Council:

Enclosed is a proposal that I feel the city council should consider. Eden Valley, as you stated in your April mailing, is experiencing an overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats. The enclosed proposal asks the city council to create a humane strategy for resolving this issue. The code of ordinances should be amended to include a n ordinance that is compatible with Eden Valley's humane Trap, Neuter, Return strategy as described in the proposal.

Please distribute the proposal to all city council members, and the mayor's office.

Respectfully,

Thomas A. Poe

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Eden Valley City Council
P.O. Box 25
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April 30, 2025

Proposal for City Council Consideration

Eden Valley City Council:

I am requesting the opportunity to present a proposal to the city council.

Recently, the city sent a newsletter that contained the following reminder:

"Cat Owners:

Do not let your cat(s) roam free. The city has a real problem with feral cats and we do not need yours adding to the problem."

I don't know how many times the city council has been approached with a humane strategy to deal with the wild/feral/community cat issue, but I do know there is a history of rejection for humane strategies having been considered by the city council.

With each of those rejections, the city council raised its' legal exposure and increased the liability issue as a result for the city. It is a certainty that residents do not want additional financial imposition from lawsuits should anyone suffer from the inaction of the city council.

"... free-roaming cats are a major public health concern due to their large populations in contact with humans and their capacity to harbour pathogens that produce disease in both humans and animals." NIH Zoonoses Public Health. 2022 Feb 7 National Library of Medicine

Presenting a proposal for a humane strategy followed by the city is requested and would be an opportunity for the city council to learn just how serious this issue is for

everyone. The city council would learn about the many studies that have been carried out across the country and across the world. The city council would learn just how inexpensive some strategies could be that would diminish the city's liability surrounding this issue.

There is an abundance of research that treats the wild/feral/community cat overpopulation as if these cats are an invasive species. The choice, however, is between a need to kill every feral cat in the community, or pursuing a humane strategy of reducing the population by neutering and allowing the cats to live out their lives, healthy and thriving, without reproducing. Remember, the problem won't disappear following either strategy. The risk of legal liability with the city is just plain wrong, at this time. Why not switch strategies and utilize a low-cost solution that benefits and protects the health and well-being of Eden Valley residents?

Thank you for your consideration, and look forward to your response to this request.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TLAR'.

Thomas A. Poe

cc: Dr. Perry

cc: John Fitzgerald

cc: Janelle Kendall

A Serious Proposal for a Deadly Serious Issue

by Thomas A. Poe

April 30, 2025

Self-Appointed Citizen Advisory Committee of one

1 Overview

If one has a choice between killing animals and neutering animals to reduce an overpopulation, does that choice become one of adopting a cruel strategy rather than adopting a humane strategy? What if adopting a cruel strategy is more expensive (and flawed)? What if a humane strategy for dealing with an animal overpopulation reduces effectively an overpopulation's impact on other wildlife? Should that strategy be sought out and encouraged through actions, rather than words? Are the decision makers obligated to adopt a humane strategy on behalf of the residents of the community they took an oath to protect and serve?

The city council, for whatever reason, is following a cruel strategy for dealing with an overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats. Restricting free roaming pets to leashes causes an imposition on city residents, and certainly does little if anything to address the overpopulation issue. Were the city council to create a humane strategy based on legislating city code that is compatible with a Trap, Neuter, Return [TNR] program that fits the city's needs, the overpopulation issue becomes manageable in a startling fashion.

TNR programs are generally community based. Volunteers carry out the actual trapping, transporting to veterinarian clinics/shelters and back. Cities may or may not help with offsets, provide creation of city code spelling out definitions and regulations surrounding the overpopulation issue [thereby protecting the legal liability of the volunteer good samaritans], join the volunteers in encouraging residents to volunteer, helping to keep the issue in front of residents through speaking engagements with students, churches, and other groups.

The city, however, does not currently have an animal control officer on staff to play a role in carrying out a humane strategy for the overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats in Eden Valley. In other words, a cruel overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats is the current policy, yet seems to be nothing more than a token gesture, resulting in a growing overpopulation that spells disaster for one or more residents. The risk continues to increase. Action is needed, badly.

The city council, as you well know, has not a year's notice, not several years' notice, but many years' notice about a serious overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats issue. A brief consultation with a risk manager would be a valuable expenditure of the city council.

2 Wild/Feral/Community Cats description,

Eden Valley has a stray cat problem. The female cats are reproducing at the rate of two or more litters each year. Exponential growth of the stray cat population has been experienced, and will continue under the current strategy followed by the city, unless the city responds.

Rabies vaccination, distemper-combo vaccination, and anti-parasitic treatments for these cats would greatly improve their health and well-being, as well as protecting the health and well-being of every resident in the city. These cats need to be neutered/spayed, if the overpopulation is going to have a chance to be brought under control. Stray cats is not a problem that can result in eliminating the population. There will always be one stray cat for whatever reason in our community.

Killing stray cats is not a solution. Simply look around, and you will begin to appreciate how difficult and expensive it is to try to eliminate any invasive species. Mosquitoes are treated as an invasive species, with spraying each year. It's a costly strategy. Adulticides or larvicides kill mosquitoes, with spraying needed to be done each year. Killing stray cats is not a solution, for the same reason. There will always be stray cats. A strategy that cats be killed requires trapping and euthanizing them (I would hope), since poisoning them is not an option.

Trapping and neutering them is a one time event. They will no longer be able to reproduce. It's a slow process, and takes several years, but such programs have positive results for the community at less cost. All you need is a volunteer educated and certified trapper, volunteers to assist her, access to a shelter/humane society or some infrastructure, and some equipment. Eden Valley already has a volunteer veterinarian in place [I hope you will work with her], otherwise it will be more expensive to utilize the Stearns county Humane Society in St. Cloud.

3 It Takes a Community

How true this adage is. The solution to an overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats lies not with the city council as such, but with the community. The role of the city council is no more than adopting a humane solution for addressing the issue of overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats. With the support of the city council, the community can move forward with a humane solution to the overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats that threaten the lives of every resident.

The city government is responsible for the health and well-being of all residents. The wild/feral/community cat overpopulation represents a direct threat, a deadly threat to all residents, as these cats carry rabies, distemper, parasites. Exposure to this overpopulation can be deadly. To address this problem, the city council, whichever strategy it adopts, is neglecting its' responsibility, unless it puts in place the following:

- Animal control officer on staff
- Create formal relationship with an animal shelter/veterinarian
- Actively support community initiatives to address the issue

The city does not have an animal control officer, as it claims on the Internet. A conversation with Evan Borscheid, the city's chief of police, revealed that he is not an animal control officer, but does animal control duties during emergencies. He stated that he is not paid for animal control officer responsibilities. The city, if it is truly following a strategy of reducing the overpopulation through the killing of stray cats in order to reduce the deadly threat these cats represent, needs to carry out its' responsibility and bring an animal control officer onto its staff. No government official wants to be accused of abrogating their oath when they took office. Nor does any government official want to be accused of not doing their job.

One solution offered is to take the adage mentioned above to heart. Reaching out to the community by supporting the community, an animal control officer position might take the form of educating and certifying residents that might want to be responsible for the setting of traps, through the state trapper association. The chief of police can then focus on handling emergencies, and the community trappers can focus on trapping cats, regardless of which strategy the city chooses to follow.

Dr. Perry, as you know, is our local veterinarian. Whatever relationship the city council has had with her in the past, the costs involved with transporting stray cats to and from her clinic are minimal, as opposed to the county humane society in St Cloud, and a formal contract should be sought, regardless of which strategy the city chooses to follow.

One solution offered is to take the adage mentioned above to heart. By choosing a humane strategy, and reaching out to support community initiatives, the city residents will move forward to address the issue of the overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats. The city currently provides the residents with a mailing each month. Including recruitment ads for volunteers is a no-brainer. Having active participation by the chief of police to periodically give talks at our schools, churches encouraging volunteers to join in the humane strategy by the city is a no-brainer.

Trap, Neuter, Return [TNR] is a program that calls for:

- Trapping of the cat by a certified trapper
- Transporting the trapped cat to an animal clinic or shelter with a veterinarian available

- Neutering the cat, and treating for rabies, distemper, parasites, and whatever else the cat needs.
- Returning the cat to where it was sheltering, as a healthy and thriving cat

With the killing strategy obviously being followed currently, the city has a legal obligation to bring onto its' staff, an animal control officer to address the overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats. A considerable cost not found with those communities that utilize a TNR strategy. The city council might decide to do both:

- Bring an animal control officer on board to set the traps
- Support educating and certifying residents to set the traps

There is a debate among legal groups about the distinction between owners of cats and caretakers of cats. Feeding a stray cat places the person doing the feeding in a precarious position. Is that person taking ownership of the stray cat, or simply a caretaker feeding a stray cat? If the city council chooses a humane strategy, that question is answered favorably on the side of being simply a caretaker, no questions asked.

If the city chooses to follow a TNR strategy, it would be supporting such legal issues for its' residents, in turn, demonstrating its' commitment to improve the lives of its' residents.

4 Eden Valley TNR Strategy

The following is taken from the Alley Cat Allies website. They have put the legislative consideration for city councils to consider quite eloquently. Please give this section some serious consideration. It will protect our caretakers and owners of cats. It will significantly lower the risk of legal liability for Eden Valley. Alley Cat Allies stands ready to work with Eden Valley city council:

Guide/How-to| Cats and the Law

Since our founding in 1990, Alley Cat Allies has helped thousands of communities draft and implement successful Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) ordinances and policies. Many of these communities have successful TNR and Shelter-Neuter-Return (SNR) policies and practices that are not spelled out in their local laws—and that's okay! You don't need a law to practice TNR or SNR.

In other communities, however, outdated ordinances are a barrier to TNR and need to be changed. Some local lawmakers and advocates may also want to codify their support of TNR.

Because of our experience and expertise, we are regularly contacted by communities and legislative bodies across the country that seek our input on ordinances. They ask us to both review draft ordinances and suggest appropriate language for those drafts.

Below are the guidelines we follow when evaluating and drafting an ordinance to make sure it reflects good public policy and values the lives of cats [see sample, below].

When you create an ordinance, there may be state laws relevant to your proposals. You should always review your state law to make sure you aren't suggesting something that would create a conflict.

Although ordinances vary, we have found three elements that are critical to success.

3 Elements for a Successful Cat Lifesaving Ordinance

1. Accurate and straightforward definitions; strong implementation language

Definitions:

Cat

A member of the domestic species *Felis Catus*.

Community Cat

A member of the domestic species *Felis Catus* and shall mean a free-roaming cat who may be cared for by one or more residents of the immediate area who is/are known or unknown; a community cat may or may not be feral.

Explanation: "Community" is an adjective that modifies the noun "cat." Having defined "cat," the task of defining "community cat" is reduced to defining "community."

Feral and community cats are distinguished from pet cats because they are less socialized to humans, meaning they are unadoptable and usually killed in animal shelters that do not have a lifesaving TNR or SNR program in place. Community cats are not wildlife.

Community Cat Caregiver

A person who, in accordance with a good faith effort to conduct Trap-Neuter-Return, provides care. This care includes providing food, shelter, or medical care to a community cat. However, community cat caregivers are not the owner, harbinger, controller, or keeper of a community cat.

Owner

Owner does not include community cat caregiver. Explanation: It is important to clarify in the animal control code that the definition of "owner" does not include "community cat caregivers."

The ordinance should define exactly what a community cat caregiver is. Community cat caregivers neither create nor maintain the outdoor cat population. Thus it is unfair to impose on them fines, fees, and other costs of ownership that the law imposes on owners. Community cat caregivers are volunteer good Samaritans.

Eartipping

The removal of the distal one-quarter of a community cat's left ear, which is approximately 3/8-inch, or 1 cm, in an adult and proportionally smaller in a kitten. This procedure is performed under sterile conditions while the cat is under anesthesia, in compliance with any applicable federal or state law, and under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

Eartips are designed to identify a community cat as being sterilized and lawfully vaccinated for rabies. Explanation: It is important to define both the process of eartipping as well as what an eartip means in every TNR ordinance.

Because eartipping is a universally accepted method to identify a spayed or neutered and vaccinated community cat, it is vital that all eartips are performed

in a similar fashion so the end results are consistent. Thus, defining the process of eartipping is needed in the ordinance.

Defining an eartip is also essential because it is the distinguishing feature between a sterilized, vaccinated community cat and an unsterilized, unvaccinated community cat.

Every individual in the community should understand what it means when they see an eartipped cat.

Additionally, community cats may interact with a variety of caregivers, veterinarians, and animal control personnel during their lives, so immediate visual identification is necessary to prevent an unnecessary second trapping and surgery.

Trap-Neuter-Return

The nonlethal process of humanely trapping, sterilizing, vaccinating for rabies, eartipping, and returning community cats to their original location.

Implementation

1. Trap-Neuter-Return shall be permitted to be practiced by community cat caregivers, organizations, and animal control, in compliance with any applicable federal or state law. As a part of Trap-Neuter-Return, spay or neuter and vaccination for rabies shall take place under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

2. A trapped eartipped cat will be released on the site where trapped unless veterinary care is required. An eartipped cat received by a shelter or animal control will be returned to the location where trapped unless veterinary care is required.

3. Community cat caregivers are empowered to reclaim impounded community cats without proof of ownership solely for the purpose of carrying out Trap-Neuter-Return and/or returning eartipped community cats to their original locations.

4. A community cat caregiver who returns a community cat to its original location while conducting Trap-Neuter-Return is not deemed to have abandoned the cat.

5. Trap-Neuter-Return shall be the preferred disposition for impounded community cats. Animal control and the local shelter are authorized and encouraged to conduct Trap-Neuter-Return or to direct impounded community cats to a Trap-Neuter-Return program.

Explanation: These additional provisions implement and clarify the intent of the ordinance. This is where your careful crafting of definitions will pay off.

Shelter-Neuter-Return

Increasingly, animal shelters are realizing that they can be a part of TNR programs – which are then termed Shelter-Neuter-Return (SNR) or Return-to-Field (RTF) programs.

Implementation of these programs results in a rapid and pronounced decrease in shelter intake and euthanasia. More ordinances should encourage or require, rather than simply permit, Shelter-Neuter-Return for impounded cats.

Important Note

Some local ordinances have so-called “leash laws” or at-large provisions, as well as licensing requirements that apply to cats. These are incompatible with TNR.

“Leash laws” or at-large provisions prohibit cats from being off the property of their owner unless under the direct control of the owner or another individual. This type of provision operates on the premise that cats being outdoors and free-roaming is illegal. Thus any cat owned or unowned – is at risk of being impounded by animal control and potentially euthanized.

Removing at-large provisions or leash laws, or exempting community cats from this type of provision, allows healthy community cats to go through a TNR program and continue to live and thrive in their outdoor homes. It also reduces the threat of owned companion cats who wander outside being impounded and killed in shelters.

Licensing provisions typically require that cats are registered with the locality and wear a collar and tag. This is an impractical and unsafe requirement for community cats. Similar to the issue with at-large provisions, any cat without a tag becomes a target for impoundment by animal control and many are ultimately euthanized.

Licensing programs have notoriously low rates of compliance, are expensive to run, and do nothing to ensure cats are spayed or neutered and vaccinated. Licensing is also ineffective at reuniting cats with their owners.

A study by the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy found that animal shelters only reunited two percent of impounded cats with their owners. Licensing provisions should be removed or community cats should be exempt from them.

2. Mandatory record-keeping and reporting of intake and disposition data

To ensure government accountability and transparency, all animal shelters should be required to (1) record the intake and disposition of each animal entering their facilities; and (2) report the totals, by species, to elected officials and to the general public.

Explanation: The taxpaying public continues to demand greater accountability for the use of limited tax dollars. The common question is “What am I getting for my money?”

To answer this question in the context of shelters, a growing number of states mandate record-keeping and reporting requirements for those facilities. Such requirements are the first critical step for the facilities themselves, as well as the legislators and the public, to evaluate their performance.

The data reported provides answers to questions like: How many cats are returned to their owners, how many are adopted, how many are killed – and at what cost?

Ultimately, this data allows concerned community members to evaluate whether public resources can be more effectively and humanely used. The knowledge that shelter data must be recorded and reported to the public is also a strong incentive for shelters to implement more effective, humane policies that protect the cats in their care.

When shelters know that the public is watching and can question them, their performance improves.

If your state does not require adequate record-keeping and reporting, consider adding these provisions into your local ordinances.

3. Incentives to promote sterilization and vaccination

Alley Cat Allies has found that incentives are far more effective than punishments in convincing the community to support TNR and aid the population of community cats. We encourage communities and legislative bodies to offset the costs community cat caregivers incur for sterilization and vaccination of cats during the TNR process.

Offsets can be accomplished through a voucher program or through making the caregivers eligible for low-cost sterilization and vaccination clinics that the local government provides. Such programs should not include registration or permit requirements.

Alley Cat Allies has repeatedly found that requiring community cat caregivers to identify themselves and/or their colonies to animal control is a surefire way to ensure such programs fail. Under those circumstances, these programs have high administrative costs and low participation and deter would-be caregivers from getting cats spayed and neutered in their communities.

A mandatory spay/neuter provision is also ineffective at increasing the sterilization rate of cats because it targets pet cats -the majority of whom are already sterilized – and not community cats.

It also punishes lower-income households, where cost is typically the reason a cat has not been spayed or neutered, and may increase the number of cats relinquished to a shelter or abandoned due to inability to comply with the law.

Please note that these guidelines are offered to assist in writing ordinances. These guidelines do not constitute specific legal advice. Additionally, these guidelines are not meant to assist in defending against citations or enforcement actions by government officials. See our guide on how to handle a citation for help with such matters.

Model Lifesaving Cat Ordinance Template

BILL NO. XX-XX

ORDINANCE No. XXXX

AN ORDINANCE ENACTING A NEW SECTION XX OF CHAPTER XX OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE, [Municipality, State]; AND FIXING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the [Board/Council] of the [City/County] of [Municipality, State] has determined that a process of trapping, sterilizing, vaccinating for rabies, eartipping, and returning cats to their original location is an effective and humane way to manage the population of cats within the [City/County]; and

WHEREAS, the [Board/Council] has determined that this process, known as Trap-Neuter-Return, is the preferred approach for managing the cat population, and that Trap-Neuter-Return shall be the prioritized disposition for any impounded community cats;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE [Board/Council] OF THE [CITY/COUNTY] OF [Municipality, State], AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION A. That a new Section XX of Chapter XX, of the Municipal Code, [City/County] of [Municipality, State], is hereby enacted:

SECTION XX: MANAGEMENT OF CAT POPULATION; PERMITTED ACTS.

Definitions. For purposes of this Section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

“Community Cat” is a member of the domestic species *Felis Catus* and shall mean a free-roaming cat who may be cared for by one or more residents of the immediate area who is/are known or unknown; a community cat may or may not be feral. Community cats are not wildlife.

“Community Cat Caregiver” shall mean a person who, in accordance with and pursuant to a policy of Trap-Neuter-Return, provides care, including, food, shelter or medical care to a community cat, while not being considered the owner, harbinger, controller, or keeper of a community cat.

“Eartipping” shall mean the removal of the distal one-quarter of a community cat’s left ear, which is approximately 3/8-inch, or 1 cm, in an adult and proportionally smaller in a kitten. This procedure is performed under sterile conditions while the cat is under anesthesia, in compliance with any applicable federal or state law, and under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian. Eartips are designed to identify a community cat as being sterilized and lawfully vaccinated for rabies.

“Trap-Neuter-Return” shall mean the process of humanely trapping, sterilizing, vaccinating for rabies, eartipping, and returning community cats to their original location.

Permitted Acts. The following actions shall be permitted in [Municipality] as part of Trap-Neuter-Return:

Trapping, for the sole purpose of sterilizing, vaccinating for rabies, and eartipping community cats, in compliance with any applicable federal or state law, and under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian, where applicable.

An eartipped cat received by local shelters will be returned to the location where trapped unless veterinary care is required. A trapped eartipped cat will be released on site unless veterinary care is required.

Community cat caregivers are empowered to reclaim impounded community cats without proof of ownership solely for the purpose of carrying out Trap-Neuter-Return and/or returning eartipped community cats to their original locations.

A person who returns a community cat to its original location while conducting Trap-Neuter-Return is not deemed to have abandoned the cat.

Trap-Neuter-Return shall be the preferred disposition for impounded community cats. Animal control and the local shelter are authorized and encouraged to conduct Trap-Neuter-Return or to direct impounded community cats to a Trap-Neuter-Return program.

SECTION B. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby expressly repealed.

SECTION C. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after the date of its passage.

5 Studies:

To offer the reader some appreciation of the seriousness that overpopulation of wild/feral/community cats represents to Eden Valley, the listing included below, is a taste of the amount of research available on the topic.

The following studies are from searching the Internet. It is not an exhaustive listing, but demonstrates considerable research is being done on humane strategies that work to control wild/feral/community cat overpopulation worldwide.

- Combine RTF and targeted TNR for greater impact

A comprehensive community cat program, combining return to field and targeted TNR, demonstrated a greater impact on feline intake and euthanasia over ongoing community-based TNR efforts. This paper examines data from the Albuquerque Animal Welfare Department, a municipal shelter in New Mexico, over a three year period. In this time, feline euthanasia declined by 84.1%, intake dropped by 37.6% and the live release rate increased by 47.7%. Additionally, the shelter saw a modest increase in cats returned to their owners and feline adoptions as well as a fewer calls to the city about dead cats.

Spehar, D. D. and P. J. Wolf (2018). "The Impact of an Integrated Program of Return-to-Field and Targeted Trap-Neuter-Return on Feline Intake and Euthanasia at a Municipal Animal Shelter." *Animals: an open access journal from MDPI* 8(4): 55.

- Targeted TNR resulted in 82% decline from peak population in neighborhood study

Citizen science was employed to document the impact of TNR in one Chicago neighborhood. Colony populations decreased by a mean of 82% from peak and 54% from when the colony was first recorded. Eight of the 20 colonies identified in the neighborhood were eliminated by the end of the study period.

Spehar, D. and P. Wolf (2018). "A Case Study in Citizen Science: The Effectiveness of a Trap-Neuter-Return Program in a Chicago Neighborhood." *Animals* 8(1): 14.

- 100% reduction in 17 years

Newburyport Massachusetts implemented a trap-neuter-return program in 1992 which resulted in the elimination of more than 300 cats from the small town's waterfront. Prior to starting TNR, then a new strategy, none of the colonies were managed. The last known cat on the waterfront died at age 16, 17 years after the TNR program began. The area has remained free of cats since that

time. Examining retrospective data, this case study illuminates the effectiveness of comprehensive humane cat management efforts, yet points to the need for the establishment of standardized data collection and assessment practices.

Spehar, D. and P. Wolf (2017). "An Examination of an Iconic Trap-Neuter-Return Program: The Newburyport, Massachusetts Case Study." *Animals* 7(11): 81.

- 31% reduction in 2 years

This survey of Australians involved in trap-neuter-return found colony size decreased from 11.5 cats to 6.5 cats in 2. 2 years, a 31% reduction, through a combination of TNR and rehoming of social cats and kittens. Those surveyed reported a median of 69% of cats being sterilized. Cats were fed daily and provided prophylactic health care (primarily treatment for fleas and intestinal parasites). TNR is not widely practiced in Australia and illegal in many communities. Respondents participated in TNR as individuals more than in association with an organization and self-funded at least some of their work.

Tan, K., et al. (2017). "Trap-Neuter-Return Activities in Urban Stray Cat Colonies in Australia." *Animals* 7(6): 46.

- An 85% reduction in population over 11 years

Before implementing a TNR program on the University of Central Florida campus, periodic trap and removal efforts tried to keep the population at bay when it increased to nuisance levels. This 11-year study followed a population of 155 free-roaming campus cats from 1991, when the TNR program began, to 2002. No kittens were observed on site after 1995. Additional stray or abandoned cats arrived, but they were neutered and adopted before they could reproduce. The campus cat population decreased by 85% to 23 cats in 2002, demonstrating that a long-term program of neutering plus adoption or a return to the resident colony can reduce freeroaming cat populations in urban areas (Levy et al., 2003).

Levy, J.K., Gale, D.W., and Gale, L.A. (2003). Evaluation of the effect of a long-term trap-neuter-return and adoption program on a free-roaming cat population. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 222,42-46.

- TNR can control feral cat populations

Robertson reviewed the scientific literature on feral cats and feral cat control and concluded that there is scientific evidence that, under certain conditions, TNR can control feral cat populations. The practice of TNR on a far greater scale, as well as continued and increased funding and endorsement of TNR by private welfare organizations and municipal and government agencies, is essential for the success of TNR (Robertson, 2008).

Robertson, S.A. (2008). A review of feral cat control. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, 10, 366-375.

- In the long run, TNR programs are cost-effective

For many years, Texas A&M University attempted to control its campus cat population with a trap-and-euthanize approach. Two years after a trap-test-vaccinate-alter-return-monitor (TTVARM) program was implemented on campus, there was a 36% reduction in the number of cats and fewer nuisance complaints to the university's pest control service. The authors also note that although the initial costs of starting up TTVARM programs can be substantial in terms of time and money, these costs tend to decrease with time as fewer new cats need to be caught (Hughes and Slater, 2002).

Hughes, K.L. and Slater, M.R. (2002). Implementation of a feral cat management program on a university campus. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 5, 15-28.

- Trap-and-remove efforts can have the opposite effect

To determine the population impact of trap and remove (culling) efforts on two open population sites in Tasmania, researchers used wildlife cameras and cat counts to track the number of cats at each site. Despite culling efforts, researchers found large increases in cat numbers: one site had a 75% increase, while another had a staggering 211% increase. Researchers suspect that the populations increased because new cats moved into the sites to take advantage of resources that became available when previously dominant cats were removed. Another explanation could be that kittens born to the unsterilized remaining cats had a better survival rate thanks to more readily available resources (Lazenby et al., 2014).

Lazenby, B.T., Mooney, N.J., and Dickman, C.R. (2014). Effects of low-level culling of feral cats in open populations: a case study from the forests of southern Tasmania. *Wildlife Research*, 41, 401-420.

This literature review is intended to be a neutral synopsis of available information and does not reflect the position or policies of The HSUS. Page 73

The following citations are for readers to pursue with a deeper understanding of what an overpopulation of cats issue might reveal.

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May 5, 2025

Dear Tom Poe

Re: feral cats

Thank you for bringing the issue of stray and feral cats to the attention of the City Council. We understand and share your concerns regarding the challenges posed by these animals in our community.

After careful consideration, the council has decided that, at this time, we will not be incorporating measures to address stray or feral cats into our ordinances. While we recognize that feral cats can be a significant issue, we believe that the financial burden of such efforts should not fall solely on taxpayers.

However, we strongly encourage community groups or local organizations to explore volunteer-based initiatives or fundraising efforts aimed at addressing this issue. Collaborative solutions, such as TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) programs, could provide a sustainable approach that involves the community directly.

I appreciate your dedication to improving our community and thank you again for bringing this matter to our attention.

Sincerely,

Mayor Brent Bengtson
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